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I Will Stir Up Egyptian Against Egyptian

19: 1-10

I will stir up Egyptian against Egyptian DIG: Egypt was the most likely ally for Judah against Assyria (see Chapters 30 and 31). Why was that so foolish? What about the Exodus might account for the idols trembling? Why wouldn't Egypt's idols, wealth or wisdom help her in her time of need?

REFLECT: How do you keep from aligning yourself with the wrong people or causes in your life? Who is there to warn you of the dangers? Even if someone told you, you were in danger, would you listen to them? Have you ignored warnings in the past? What was the result? What would you do different now?

An oracle concerning Egypt. Some of **the Jews** living in Judah wanted to look to **Egypt** for help against the Assyrian threat. But **Isaiah** pointed out that **Egypt** would be no help at all, because she too would be overwhelmed by **the LORD's** judgment. In this poem of three nearly equal strophes **the LORD** exposes the weaknesses that would supposedly make **Egypt** great: **her idols (19:1-4)**, **her wealth (19:5-10)**, and **her wisdom (19:11-15)**. None of these could save **Egypt** against the coming onslaught, so why should Judah tie her national destiny to that doomed nation? So in general terms, **ADONAI** is merely exposing **Egypt's** weaknesses in **19:1-5**. She is no solution to the Assyrian problem facing Judah. The details are not important.

First, **Egypt's idols** could not save **her**. **Isaiah** tells Judah that **Egypt** will be judged by means of internal troubles, which will lead to a civil war. **See, ADONAI rides on a swift cloud and is coming to Egypt (19:1a)**. **God** is pictured riding **on a swift cloud (Ps 68:4 and 33; 104:3)**. In Canaanite mythology this same idea is used of Ba'al, the god of rain and fertility. But, **God**, not Ba'al, is the true **Giver** of rain (something **Egypt** would really need) and fertility. The gods of **Egypt** would not be able to save their people from the coming judgments.⁵⁷ **The idols of Egypt tremble before Him, and the hearts of the Egyptians melt within**

them (19:1b). Egypt's many **idols** will be exposed as worthless before the presence of **God**. **They** can offer neither help nor hope. **Their idols** will **tremble before Him** and will cause **the Egyptians** to be disheartened and depressed.



Egypt will be judged by means of internal troubles, which will lead to a civil war. **I will stir up Egyptian against Egyptian - brother will fight against brother, neighbor against neighbor, city against city, kingdom against kingdom (19:2).** Throughout her history **Egypt** was especially prone to civil war. After six strong dynasties of the Old Kingdom, there came a two hundred year period when each of the forty-two city-states became independent and chaos reigned. Then the Twelfth Dynasty again united the people for about two hundred years, but chaos again took over for two centuries. Each city-state had its own god, which would lead to dissolution if there was no one man who had enough leadership capabilities to pull the nation together under one pharaoh. And so it went again and again. **Isaiah** sees this kind of disaster ahead for **Egypt**. In general terms, **her gods** could not hold **her** together because of **God's** judgment.

Not only would there be civil war, there would be judgment against **Egyptian** occult practices. **The Egyptians will lose heart, and I will bring their plans to nothing (19:3a).** When people begin to lose their **hope**, depression settles in. They become despondent, lacking in spirit. When this happens, spirit is often replaced by spiritism. And that is exactly what will happen in **Egypt**. **Isaiah** prophesied that **they** would **consult** with **idols and the spirits of the dead**, with **mediums and spiritists (Isaiah 8:19; Leviticus 19:31, 20:6).** **Losing the power of logical reasoning, the Egyptians have clung to sorcery and**

witchcraft (19:3b).

The nation whose gods have deserted them is ripe for oppression. It lacks both the will and the guts to resist any attack from either inside or outside the nation. And then **a cruel master and a fierce king** will overtake them. **Egypt**, who centuries before had been **a cruel master** over Isra'el (see the commentary on **Exodus, to see link click Ag - Then a New King Who Did Not Know About Joseph Came to Power**), would now be the object of cruelty. **And a fierce king will rule over them.** This judgment would come from **ADONAI, the LORD of heavens armies (19:4).**

Secondly, **Egypt's wealth** could not save **her**. It is not an understatement to say that without the **Nile** there would be no **Egypt**. The lifeblood and the entire industry of **Egypt** were based upon the **Nile River**. Therefore, to show that the judgment would come from **God, Isaiah** said that the destruction would affect **Egypt's** natural resources. **The waters of the river will dry up (19:19:5a).** Here **Isaiah** pointed to the fact that if the **Nile** were ever shut off, the rich and haughty **Egypt** would cease to exist. The critical weakness that **Isaiah** was emphasizing to Judah in this strophe is not to depend on a country who could not even control its only resource for existence. It was not in **their** own hands, it was in the hands of **God**.

This would result in the destruction of certain industries. **The riverbed will be parched and dry. The canals will stink; the streams of Egypt will dwindle and dry up (19:5b-6a).** Before **God**, the mighty **Nile** could be shut off, the canals made dry and stinking, and the Delta become as dry as a desert. Why would Judah want to commit herself to a nation as vulnerable as that!

The first result of the river's drying up would be the destruction of the lush plant life along its edges. **The reeds and rushes will wither, also the plants along the Nile, at the mouth of the river.** But not only would the **rushes** and the papyrus **reeds** disappear, but **every sown field along the Nile** would **become parched, blow away and be no more (19:6b-7).** Throughout **Egypt's** history, she was able to export grain to the rest of the world. Paul traveled to Rome on a grain ship from **Egypt** in **Acts 28:11**. When judgment comes, however, **she** will not be able to feed herself let alone anyone else.

But if the **Nile** dried up, so would the marine life. **The fisherman will groan and lament, all who cast hooks into the Nile; those who throw nets on the water will pine away (19:8).** **Fishing** was one of the major industries of **Egypt**

(Numbers 11:5; Ezeki'el 29:4), and that industry would obviously cease to exist if the **Nile** stopped flowing. Would **the Egyptians** once again turn to **their** many **idols** who were supposed to protect **the Nile** (see the commentary on **Exodus Bk - Strike the Water of the Nile and It Will Be Turned into Blood**)?

Another industry representative of **the Egyptian** life was the production of **linen** from **flax**. **Those who combed flax** to break down its fibers to make thread will **despair, the weavers of fine linen will lose hope (19:9)**. Like the production of grain and the fishing industry, the growing of **flax** and the making of **fine linen** was totally dependent upon on the **Nile**. But the Judeans needed to **understand** that all of it could be taken away in an instant. Who would put their trust in something as tenuous as that?

The result would be unemployment. **The workers in cloth will be dejected, and all the wage earners will be sick at heart (19:10)**. The entire economy depended upon the **Nile River**. **Isaiah** knew the country well, but was convinced that all **its** productivity was no more than a gift from **God**.